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111 E Main St, 2nd Floor
Sevierville, TN 37862
imaginationlibrary.com

Dear Kansas Legislature,

Thank you for sharing in my dream – “Create a love for books and reading - give every child the start they need in education and life.”

Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library began with Dolly’s desire that every child, regardless of income, would have access to books. Growing up in poverty with a father who was functionally illiterate, Dolly witnessed as a small child how her father’s inability to read and write held him back from achieving his dreams. With her father as inspiration, the Imagination Library comes from a very personal place for Dolly.

The program’s universal aspect is also rooted in Dolly’s personal experience, recalling what it felt like to be treated like a poor family and receiving handouts. She didn’t want any child to feel like they were receiving the books because they were poor and instead that this “**gift**” should be for all children, as equals.

Thank you for agreeing it is imperative your youngest learners have access to high-quality, age-appropriate books. We agree nothing is more basic, more essential, more foundational to a child’s success in life than the ability to read!

Since statewide launch in 2021, we have seen increasing demand and participating numbers with a 21% increase of registered children. The statewide program is currently serving 26% of your 183,236 0-5 children but there are so many more children and families without access to books.

The Dollywood Foundation is thrilled to partner with the Kansas Children’s Cabinet to get more books into the hands of more Kansas children and families!

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Thank you for considering HB 2191 authorizing the creation of a 501c3 to support the Imagination Library of Kansas.

The Dollywood Foundation requires a specifically created 501c3 for the single purpose of fostering, developing and sustaining Imagination Library programs in every county across Kansas. There are several reasons for this requirement.

A 501c3 is needed to facilitate the Statewide Program as The Dollywood Foundation's unique, turnkey, and cost-effective approach to administering the Imagination Library relies heavily on multiple, targeted partner strategies, which purposely have scalable and sustainable applications. Since costs are shared between The Dollywood Foundation, the State, and community sources, a 501c3 provides the organizational structure to raise funds, accept donations and provide tax receipts. This "Shared Funding Stakeholder Model" provides stability and sustainability for local and statewide programs. Funders and local partners facilitate the cost of providing books so there is no cost to the families

Books are mailed at a special non profit rate that keeps costs low and the United States Postal Service (USPS) requires a 501c3 and authorization to mail books under The Dollywood Foundation's bulk mail permit.

As our statewide partner, Kansas Children's Cabinet, must have the ability to act as the supporting organization to ensure involvement of Kansas children in foster care and other institutional systems.

Thank you for partnering with The Dollywood Foundation to ensure all Kansas children from birth to 5 years old have access to high-quality, age-appropriate books monthly at no cost to families!

Kindly,

Nora Briggs
Executive Director, The Dollywood Foundation

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